



CASE STUDY

Water Restoration in New Mexico

At Facebook, we aim to minimize our energy, emissions, and water impact, while embracing the responsibility and opportunity to impact the world beyond our operations.

The opportunity

Minimizing our water use is a key focus at Facebook, and we are proud to say our data centers use 80% less water than the average data center. When we started building our Los Lunas Data Center in New Mexico, a region known for its dry climate, we knew we wanted to partner to find sustainable solutions to address a shared water challenge with the community.

In 2017, we began partnering with the local community through Bonneville Environmental Foundation's Business For Water Stewardship program to find projects that could help restore water in the Rio Grande watershed. To date, we have identified and implemented three water restoration projects in the Rio Grande.

The solution

The Rio Grande is one of the largest rivers in the United States and Mexico and is the lifeline for numerous cities, industries, and farmland. The lives and livelihoods of millions of people depend on this vital resource – one that has experienced frequent and severe droughts and faces a difficult and uncertain future in a changing climate.

When we knew the Los Lunas Data Center would start serving traffic soon, we took the opportunity to partner with the community to restore the wetlands and streams in the Rio Grande. The projects we support are focused on restoring the hydrology in a beneficial way and contribute towards reducing shared water challenges in local and regional watersheds.

↑ Middle Rio Grande Project,
Albuquerque, New Mexico.
Credit: Paul Tashjian at Audubon

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Together with the National Forest Foundation, Trout Unlimited, and the U.S Forest Service, we supported the [Comanche Creek restoration project](#). This project reconnected the stream channel with the historic floodplain, reduced stream bank erosion, dispersed flows, and created off-channel wetland and meadow habitats. Although the project was only completed in 2018, positive results have already been observed and the elevation of the water table is higher as a result of this project.

With the Audubon Society, the Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District, the Bureau of Reclamation, and other area stakeholders, we supported the [Middle Rio Grande flow restoration project](#). This project delivered fresh water to locations specifically to assist with habitat restoration during the dry summer season. Our efforts, in concert with many others, played a part in keeping the entire 35-mile Isleta Reach flowing for approximately 58 days in 2018, which was crucial to sustaining wetland vegetation and the quality of fish and wildlife habitat during an abnormally dry year.

The impact

These projects have improved water quality, increased water quantity, enhanced groundwater conditions and habitat, and improved forage for both wildlife and livestock. The projects have collectively restored miles of stream, 17 acres of off-channel floodplain wetland habitat, and helped with the protection of a number of endangered species, including the Rio Grande Silvery Minnow, the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, and the Rio Grande cutthroat trout.

The water restored through these projects is roughly equivalent to the water we used during construction and the water we use in one building in a year. With a six-building campus, we know we have more work to do. Los Lunas and New Mexico is now our home and we are committed to continuing to find projects that will allow us to restore water to the community.



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More information

For more information visit our Sustainability site at sustainability.fb.com

Sources:

<https://businessforwater.org/projects/comanche-creek-restoration-of-natural-hydrology>
<https://businessforwater.org/projects/middle-rio-grande-abiquiu-flow-restoration>
<https://businessforwater.org/projects/conejos-river>